

## NIEHS launches website redesigned for mobile devices

By Eddy Ball

Like it or not, mobile devices are taking over world communications, and organizations that want to get their messages out are having to adapt. Mobile industry estimates suggest that, in the not too distant future, nearly everyone in the world will communicate through cell phones, tablets, and other mobile devices.

NIEHS took a huge step forward June 28 by launching a redesigned public website that is easily viewed and navigated on a broad variety of mobile devices, such as smart phones and tablets. This new responsive Web design gives the Institute a distinct advantage in its efforts to reach the billions of people worldwide who experience the Web on a small screen — and may not use or even have access to a desktop computer.

“Our responsive website will help us meet the environmental health needs of a changing world,” said NIEHS Communications Director Christine Flowers. “We’re one of the first organizations of our kind to address this communications challenge.” While people everywhere are going mobile, Flowers added, the growth is greatest in the developing countries where NIEHS global environmental health research is especially relevant.

Flowers credits her team, including NIEHS Web manager Cheryl Thompson, and digital information specialist Joe Poccia, and information technology specialist Sharon Hite for their leadership and technical expertise in completing the challenging project.

### A new look for mobile users

To experience how much a responsive website changes the landscape for visitors to NIEHS public Web pages, it’s helpful to see how the pages appear on different devices. While the content remains the same, whether it’s accessed on a 27-inch desktop screen or 2.44-inch wide mobile display, the arrangement changes automatically for optimal viewing.

Instead of simply shrinking a Web page to fit a screen — much the way widescreen films are truncated to fit the standard television screen — the NIEHS responsive website is capable of reformatting the page for mobile devices, to retain virtually all the information seen on a desktop monitor. Buttons are also larger and easier to touch with fingers, and graphics are used judiciously to save mobile users precious bandwidth.

According to Thompson, the majority of the public website is now available in responsive format, and the remaining public pages, such as the Environmental Factor newsletter and Kids’ Pages, are in development.

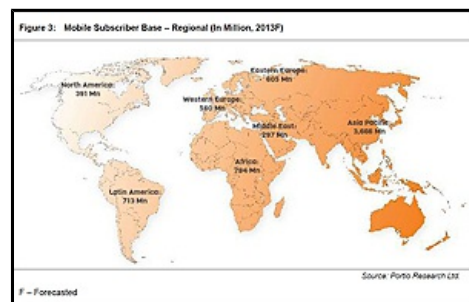
### Playing by the numbers

According to industry estimates reported in the [Portio Research Mobile Factbook 2013](http://www.portioresearch.com/en/free-mobile-factbook.aspx), the worldwide mobile subscriber base was expected to reach 6.5 billion by the end of last year, taking global mobile penetration to approximately 92 percent of the world’s population. The subscriber base is forecast to increase at what the industry is calling a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.3 percent between 2011 and 2016, to reach nearly 8.5 billion by end of 2016, with growth led by markets in Asia Pacific and Africa.

Although population estimates vary according to the model used (see ScienceDaily [story](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/04/130404072923.htm)), the number of people on earth could reach as high as 15 billion by mid-century, with the greatest increases in developing countries. If CAGR increases continue as anticipated, even more of the world’s people will be getting their information on the small screen, and responsive website capability will become more important than ever as a tool for effective communication.



*With the NIEHS responsive website capability, the landscape changes, but the message comes across in its entirety. Sizes shown above range from a 1024-pixel wide desktop monitor screen, left, to a 244-pixel wide cell phone display, right. (Photo courtesy of Joe Poccia)*



*The growth in use of mobile devices is greatest in the very countries where desktop ownership is likely to be lowest — and the need for reliable information about global health issues the most pressing.*

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